

IMAGE PROCESSING APPARATUS AND METHOD THEREOF

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to an image processing apparatus for encoding an image (image data) and a voice (audio data) and to a method thereof.

Related Background Art

10 A digital video camera and a digital still camera for private use may be given as recording/reproducing apparatuses capable of recording and reproducing an image. Each of these apparatuses executes processing of compressing image
15 data when recording and transmitting the image such as a still image and a moving image.

 General standards related to an image compression technology are exemplified such as JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) for the still
20 image and Motion-JPEG, MPEG1 (Moving Picture Experts Group 1), MPEG2 and MPEG4 for the moving image, and recently an examination of new standards such as JPEG2000 is underway.

 Further, some of the image compression
25 technologies are capable of encoding a specific region of the image with a higher image quality than in other regions. For example, in case an ROI

(Region Of Interest) encoding method is used, an ROI region within a certain picture image can be displayed with the high image quality after being decoded or can be preferentially displayed when being transmitted.

Japanese Patent Application Laid-Open No.2001-230947 discloses a digital still camera, conceived as a camera utilizing such an ROI encoding method, capable of recording and reproducing by effecting the ROI setting of a specified region in a picked-up image and a compression thereof. In the case of performing the ROI setting in the camera, an ROI setting area or object includes a significant and interesting subject in the picture in many cases.

By the way, in the case of applying the ROI setting for a moving image, it is considered that the ROI setting can be done on a frame-by-frame basis in frames forming the moving image. At this time, the frame (ROI frame) including the ROI contains the interesting subject and is therefore considered more significant to a photographer than a frame containing no ROI (which is called a non-ROI frame).

On the occasion of reproducing the moving image data that are encoded including the ROI frame, however, the encoded moving image data are merely decoded and displayed irrespective of the significance described above. Namely, even in a case

where the significance is differentiated between the frames, it is impossible to change even a quality of audio data reproduced together with the moving image, in accordance with this significance.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An object of the present invention is to solve the above-described problem.

Another object of the invention is to provide
10 an image processing apparatus and a method thereof that have such an architecture as to emphasize a significance of a picture by enhancing a quality of audio data to be reproduced during a period for which ROI is contained in a moving image to be reproduced
15 and are capable of performing an expression exhibiting a high visual effect.

As a preferred embodiment for such objects, the present invention discloses an image processing apparatus comprising image encoding means for
20 encoding image data inputted, an audio data encoding means for encoding audio data inputted together with the image data, an image encoding setting means for setting the image encoding means to encode the image data so that a scene exhibiting a high degree of
25 significance is encoded with a high image quality, and an audio data encoding setting means for setting the audio data encoding means to process the audio

data in accordance with the setting by the image encoding setting means so that the audio data is processed with a high acoustic quality.

Further, the present invention discloses an
5 image processing method comprising an image encoding step of inputting a moving image and encoding image data thereof, an audio data encoding step of encoding audio data inputted together with the moving image, an image encoding setting step of setting the image
10 encoding step to encode, with a high image quality, a partial region of each of frame images forming the moving image, and an audio data encoding setting step of setting the audio data encoding step to process the audio data with a high definition in accordance
15 with the setting in the image encoding setting step.

Still other objects of the present invention, and the advantages thereof, will become fully apparent from the following detailed description of the embodiments.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an explanatory view of moving image data used in the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of an image
25 processing apparatus 200 in a first embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is an explanatory view of an ROI setting

period and an ROI non-setting period;

FIG. 4 is a flowchart of moving image data
encoding processing executed by the image processing
apparatus 200 in the first embodiment of the present
5 invention;

FIG. 5 is an explanatory view of a structure of
moving image encoded data;

FIG. 6 is an explanatory view of a structure of
the moving image encoded data;

10 FIG. 7 is a block diagram of an ROI setting
unit 208;

FIG. 8 is a flowchart of processing of the ROI
setting unit 208;

FIG. 9 is an explanatory view of a method of
15 selecting an ROI object in a digital still camera (or
a digital vide camera);

FIG. 10 is an explanatory view of ROI and the
ROI object;

FIG. 11 is an explanatory view of an ROI mask;

20 FIG. 12 is a block diagram of a frame data
encoding unit 202;

FIG. 13 is a flowchart of processing of the
frame data encoding unit 202;

FIG. 14 is an explanatory view of a one-
25 dimensional discrete wavelet transform;

FIG. 15A is a view showing how a sub-band is
divided into four sub-bands; FIG. 15B is a view

showing how an LL sub-band in FIG. 15A is further divided into four sub-bands; FIG. 15C is a view showing how the LL sub-band in FIG. 15B is further divided into four sub-bands;

5 FIG. 16 is an explanatory view of a quantization step;

FIGS. 17A, 17B and 17C are explanatory views of the ROI and the non-ROI in each sub-band;

10 FIG. 18 is an explanatory view of a division of a code block;

FIG. 19 is an explanatory view of bit plane slicing;

FIG. 20 is an explanatory view of a coding pass;

15 FIG. 21 is an explanatory view of a generation of layers;

FIG. 22 is an explanatory view of the generation of layers;

20 FIG. 23 is an explanatory view of a structure of encoded frame data;

FIG. 24 is a block diagram of an audio data encoding unit 204;

FIG. 25 is a flowchart of processing of the audio data encoding unit 204;

25 FIG. 26 is a flowchart of processing of a dynamic bit assignment unit 2406;

FIG. 27 is an explanatory view of a structure

of encoded audio data;

FIG. 28 is a block diagram of an image processing apparatus 2800 in a third embodiment of the present invention;

5 FIG. 29 is a block diagram of an audio data encoding unit 2801;

FIG. 30 is a block diagram of an optimum encoded audio data determination unit 2904; and

10 FIG. 31 is a block diagram of an image processing apparatus 3100 in a second embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The preferred embodiments of the present
15 invention will now be described in detail hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings.

First Embodiment

Video data to be dealt with in the embodiments of the present invention are, as shown in FIG. 1,
20 composed of image data structured of an aggregation of a plurality of frames each formed for every period(1/30 sec may be given by way of one example) and audio data corresponding to the image data.

An image processing apparatus 200 in the first
25 embodiment is capable of performing, as illustrated in FIG. 3, ROI (Region Of Interest) setting for arbitrary regions in arbitrary frames of such video

data. Further, the image processing apparatus 200 in the first embodiment is constructed to take a ROI setting period into consideration as a mark of a significant scene and executes, when in reproduction
5 processing, encoding processing of audio data so as to change a bit rate (an amount of assignment bits) so that a quality of the audio data outputted for this ROI setting period becomes higher than a quality of the audio data outputted for an ROI non-setting
10 period. Details of this construction will be given as follows.

FIG. 2 shows a block diagram of the image processing apparatus in the first embodiment. FIG. 4 shows a flowchart explaining an operation of this
15 image processing apparatus.

Referring to FIG. 2, the image processing apparatus 200 is constructed of an image data obtaining unit 201, an image data encoding unit 202, an audio data obtaining unit 203, an audio data
20 encoding unit 204, a data integration unit 205, an encoded video data output unit 206, an ROI setting instruction unit 207, an ROI setting unit 208 and a memory 209.

The discussion will be made with reference to
25 the flowchart in FIG. 4.

To start with, the image data and the audio data are inputted respectively from the image data

obtaining unit 201 and the audio data obtaining unit 203 (step S401). The image data obtaining unit 201 and the audio data obtaining unit 203 may include an image pickup apparatus such as a digital video camera, a digital still camera, etc. or an image pickup device such as a CCD (Charged Couple Device), an interface with a network line, and an external audio data input device or a microphone, etc.. Alternatively, the image data obtaining unit 201 and the audio data obtaining unit 203 may include a recording medium such as a RAM (Random Access memory), a ROM (Read-Only Memory), a hard disk, a CD-ROM (Compact Disk ROM), etc., and a reproducing device thereof.

The image data obtained from the image data obtaining unit 201 are inputted on a frame-by-frame data basis to the image data encoding unit 202. The audio data obtained from the audio data obtaining unit 203 are inputted to the audio data encoding unit 204.

If a user does not give an instruction of the ROI setting from the ROI setting instruction unit 207 (No in step S402) when inputting the image data to the image data encoding unit 202, the image data are subjected to normal encoding on a frame-by-frame basis in the image data encoding unit 202, while the audio data are encoded at a low bit rate than usual

in the audio data encoding unit 204 (step S402). The thus-generated encoded frame data and encoded audio data are outputted to the data integration unit 205.

While on the other hand, if the user gives the
5 instruction of the ROI setting from the ROI setting instruction unit 207 (Yes in step S402) when inputting the image data to the image data encoding unit 202, the ROI setting unit 208 executes ROI setting so as to send to the image data encoding unit
10 202 information indicating which region in the frame is a target for the ROI setting, send to the audio data encoding unit 204 information indicating that the ROI setting is to be conducted, and read and write information on the ROI setting from and to the
15 memory 209 (step S404). After this setting, the image data encoding unit 202 encodes (ROI-encodes) the inputted frame data so that the ROI-designated region is encoded with a high quality while other regions are encoded with a low quality, and further
20 the audio data encoding unit 204 encodes the inputted audio data at a high bit rate so that the encoded audio data come to have a high audio quality (step S405). The thus-generated encoded frame data and encoded audio data are outputted to the data
25 integration unit 205.

In the data integration unit 205, upon inputs of the encoded audio data and the encoded frame data,

as shown in FIG. 5, a data integration is carried out to array the encoded audio data and the encoded frame data according to a predetermined rule. Further, as shown in FIG. 6, data needed for decoding a header, etc. are inserted into predetermined positions, thereby generating encoded video data (step S406).

Thereafter, the thus-generated encoded video data are outputted to the outside from the encoded video data output unit 206 (step S407). This encoded video data output unit 206 may include an interface with a wire line, a public line, a LAN (Local Area Network), etc., through which the outputted encoded video data are transmitted to an unillustrated recording device, display device and so on.

Next, an operation of the ROI setting unit 208 will be described. FIG. 7 shows a detailed block diagram of the ROI setting unit 208, and FIG. 8 shows a flowchart of processing related to the ROI setting.

Referring to FIG. 7, the ROI setting instruction unit 207, when receiving an instruction of the ROI setting from the user, transfers this instruction to the ROI setting unit 208. The ROI setting unit 208, upon receiving the instruction transferred, obtains any item of ROI object information preset by the user (step S801).

ROI objects connote objects stored within the memory 209, and it is required that the ROI set by

the user be the same as the ROI object (or the ROI should contain the ROI object).

Note that as one mode of a method employed for the user to select the ROI object, there can be given
5 a method of operating GUI (Graphical User Interface), as illustrated in FIG. 9, on a liquid crystal screen provided in an image pickup apparatus such as a digital video camera, a digital still camera, etc., which are mounted with the image processing apparatus
10 200. Specifically, a point movable on a menu screen displayed on the liquid crystal screen is moved and determined by a point manipulation unit, thus selecting a desired ROI object.

Upon completion of obtaining the ROI object
15 information, the frame data input unit 701 obtains from the image data encoding unit 202 a copy of the frame data before being encoded (step S802). Next, an ROI object recognition unit 702 searches for an object on the frame data concerned, which corresponds
20 to the ROI object selected by the user (step S803). The ROI recognition unit 702, when the concerned object is detected through this search (step S804), as shown in FIG. 10, sets as the ROI a region that includes the detected object (step S805).

25 Thereafter, an ROI mask generation unit 703 generates, as shown in FIG. 11, an ROI mask indicating an ROI position in the frame (step S806)

and outputs ROI mask information thereof to an ROI mask output unit 704. The ROI mask output unit 704 outputs the inputted ROI mask information to the image data encoding unit 202 (step S807).

5 Thereafter, it is judged whether a frame to be subsequently processed is defined as an ROI frame or not (step S808). If the frame concerned is the ROI frame, the processing loops back to step S802.

Next, FIG. 12 shows a detailed block diagram of
10 the image data encoding unit 202, FIG. 13 shows a flowchart for explaining the processing operation of the image data encoding unit 202, and the processing of encoding the image data will be described in depth with reference to FIGS. 12 and 13.

15 It is assumed in the first embodiment that the encoding target frame data in the image be 8-bit monochrome data. The present invention can be, however, applied to a case in which the encoding target frame data are a monochrome image whose pixel
20 is expressed by bits other than 8 bits, such as 4 bits, 10 bits, 12 bits, etc. or color multi-value frame data in which each color component (RGB/Lab/YCrCb) of each pixel is expressed in 8 bits. Further, the present invention can be applied to a
25 case where the encoding target frame data are multi-value information representing states, etc. of the respective pixels that form the image, for instance,

a case where the encoding target frame data is a multi-value index value representing a color of each pixel. In the case of being applied to these cases, each category of multi-value information may be set
5 as the monochrome frame data which will be explained later on.

To begin with, pixel data of the encoding target frame data are inputted in a sequence of a raster scan to a frame data/ROI mask input unit 1201
10 from the image data obtaining unit 201 and then outputted to a discrete wavelet transform unit 1202. Further, if the ROI setting unit 208 is generating the ROI mask corresponding to the frame concerned, the ROI mask information is inputted to the frame
15 data/ROI mask input unit 1201 and outputted therefrom to a buffer 1209 (step S1301).

The discrete wavelet transform unit 1202 performs a discrete wavelet transform by use of data (reference pixel data) of a plurality of pixels
20 (reference pixels) in one set of tile data $x(n)$ existing in one still image inputted from the frame data/ROI mask input unit 1201 (step S1302).

Frame data (discrete wavelet transform coefficient) after the discrete wavelet transform has
25 been done, are given as follows:

$$Y(2n) = X(2n) + \text{floor} \{ (Y(2n-1) + Y(2n+1) + 2) / 4 \}$$

$$Y(2n+1) = X(2n+1) - \text{floor} \{ (X(2n) + X(2n+2)) / 2 \}$$

where $Y(2n)$ and $Y(2n+1)$ is a discrete wavelet transform coefficient train, the former is a low frequency sub-band and the latter is a high frequency sub-band. Further, in the formulae given above, floor{X} represents a maximum integer value that does not exceed X. FIG. 14 shows a schematic representation of this discrete wavelet transform.

These transform formulae are formulated for the one-dimensional data, however, a two-dimensional transform is effected by applying this transform to a horizontal direction and a vertical direction in this sequence, thereby enabling a division into four sub-bands of LL, HL, LH and HH as shown in FIG. 15A. Herein, L represents a low frequency sub-band, and H denotes a high frequency sub-band. FIG. 15B shows a case in which the LL sub-band is further divided likewise into four sub-bands, and FIG. 15C shows a case in which an LL sub-band among these divided sub-bands is further divided into four sub-bands, whereby totally ten sub-bands are created. The ten sub-bands shall be respectively called HH1, HL1, ... as shown in FIG. 15C. Herein, the numerals suffixed to the names of the respective sub-bands shall be levels of these individual sub-bands. Namely, the sub-bands having a level "1" are HL1, HH1, LH1, the sub-bands having a level "2" are HL2, HH2, LH2, and the sub-bands having

a level "3" are HL3, HH3, LH3. Note that the LL sub-band shall be a sub-band having a level "0". The LL sub-band is only one and is therefore attached with no suffix. Further, decoded images obtained by
5 decoding the sub-bands having the level "0" through the level "n" are referred to as level-n decoded images. The decoded images exhibit higher resolutions as they have higher levels.

With a mechanism described above, the transform
10 coefficients of the ten sub-bands generated by the discrete wavelet transform unit 1202 are temporarily stored (buffered) in the buffer 1203 and then outputted to a coefficient quantization unit 1204 in this order of LL, HL1, LH1, HH1, HL2, LH2, HH2, HL2,
15 LH3, HH3, i.e., in the order of the sub-band level from the lowest up to the highest.

The coefficient quantization unit 1204 quantizes the transform coefficient of each sub-band that is outputted from the buffer 1203, with a
20 quantization step determined for every frequency component, and generates a value after being quantized (which is called a coefficient quantized value) (step S1303). Let "X" be a coefficient value and "q" be a value of the quantization step with
25 respect to the frequency component belonging to this coefficient, and a coefficient value $Q(X)$ after being quantized shall be acquired by the following formula:

$$Q(X) = \text{floor} \{ (X/q) + 0.5 \}$$

FIG. 16 shows mappings (correspondences) of the respective frequency components to the quantization steps. As shown in FIG. 16, a larger quantization
5 step is assigned to the sub-band having a higher level. Note that the quantization steps of the respective sub-bands are to be stored beforehand in the memory such as the unillustrated RAM, ROM, etc..

Then, the coefficient quantization unit 1204,
10 in case the ROI mask information corresponding to the frame data that is now being processed exists in the buffer 1209 (Yes in step S1304), outputs those coefficient quantized values to a shift-up unit 1205. Moreover, if the ROI mask attached to the frame data
15 concerned does not exist in the buffer 1209 (No in step S1304), those coefficient quantized values are outputted to an entropy coding unit 1206.

The shift-up unit 1205 changes (shifts up), based on the following formulae, the coefficient
20 quantized values so that an ROI image quality in the corresponding frame becomes higher than a non-ROI image quality in accordance with the ROI mask information stored in the buffer 1209 (step S1305).

$Q' = Q * 2^B$ (Q: an absolute value of the
25 coefficient quantized value existing within the ROI)

$Q' = Q$ (Q: an absolute value of the

coefficient quantized value existing outside
the ROI)

where B is a value given to each sub-band, and each
Q' is set larger than every Q'' to be given in
5 subjected sub-band.

Through the processing described above, only
the coefficient quantized value belonging to a space
area designated in the shift-up unit 1205, is shifted
up by B bits.

10 FIG. 17A shows the ROI and the non-ROI in each
sub-band. FIGS. 17B and 17C show changes in the
coefficient quantized value due to the shift-up. In
FIG. 17B, three coefficient quantized values exist in
each of three sub-bands, and the coefficient
15 quantized values with half-tone meshing are
coefficient quantized values of the ROI and appear as
shown in FIG. 17C after being shifted up.

The coefficient quantized values subjected to
the processing described above are outputted to the
20 entropy encoding unit 1206.

The entropy encoding unit 1206 effects entropy-
encoding of the inputted coefficient quantized values
(step S1306). Herein, at first, as shown in FIG. 18,
each sub-band defined as an aggregation of the
25 inputted coefficient quantized values is divided into
rectangles (which are called code blocks). Note that
a size of this code block is set such as $2m \times 2n$ (m,

n are integers each larger than 2) and so on.

Further, this code block is, as shown in FIG. 19, further divided (sliced) into bit planes. After this slicing into the bit planes, as illustrated in FIG. 20, the respective bits in a certain bit plane are classified into three types on the basis of a given classification rule, and three categories of coding passes are each generated by aggregating the same type of bits. The inputted coefficient quantized values are subjected to binary arithmetic encoding defined as the entropy encoding on a unit basis of the coding pass obtained herein, thereby generating entropy-encoded values.

Note that a specific processing order of the entropy encoding is herein such that the encoding is, as for one code block, conducted in the sequence from the upper bit plane to the lower bit plane, and, as for a certain bit plane of one code block, the three categories of passes in FIG. 20 are to be encoded in the sequence from the uppermost pass.

The coding passes, which have been entropy-encoded as described above, are outputted to a frame encoded data generation unit 1207.

The frame encoded data generation unit 1207 constructs a single or a plurality of layers from the plurality of coding passes inputted, and generates frame encoded data, wherein the layer is used as a

data unit (step S1307). The following is an explanation about a layer structure.

This processing unit, as shown in FIG. 21, gathers the entropy-encoded coding passes from the plurality of code blocks in the plurality of sub-bands, and thus constructs the layers. Note that when obtaining the coding passes from a certain code block, the coding pass existing at the highest-order in the code block concerned is invariably selected as illustrated in FIG. 22.

Thereafter, the frame encoded data generation unit 1207, as in an example in FIG. 23, arranges the generated layers in the sequence of their positions from the uppermost to the lowermost, and adds a header to the head of the frame to generate the frame encoded data. This header is stored with information for identifying the frame, a code length of the frame encoded data concerned, a lengthwise/crosswise size of the input frame, a variety of parameters used for compression, etc..

The thus generated frame encoded data are outputted to a next processing circuit via a frame encoded data output unit 1208 (step S1308).

What has been given so far is the detailed explanation of the image data encoding unit 202.

Next, FIG. 24 shows a detailed block diagram of the audio data encoding unit 204, FIG. 25 is a

flowchart for explaining the processing operation of the audio data encoding unit 204 concerned, and the audio data encoding process will be described in detail with reference to FIGS. 24 and 25.

5 To start with, the inputted audio data, which have been linearly quantized by 16 bits, are inputted to an audio data input unit 2401 (step S2501) and outputted to a sub-band division unit 2402 and a fast Fourier transform unit (FFT unit) 2404.

10 The sub-band division unit 2402 divides the inputted audio data into 32 sub-bands through 512-tap PFBs (Polyphase Filter Banks) (step S2502). A sub-band division procedure is shown as below.

 To begin with, for 512 input signal samples X_0, \dots, X_{511} , a calculation is made as follows:

$$Z_i = C_i \times X_i$$

Herein, what is defined in a table in ISO/IEC11172-3 is considered as one model of C_i .

Next, the following calculation is made:

20
$$Y_i = \sum_{j=0}^7 Z_{64j+i}$$

and, the sub-band output S_i is calculated based on the following formula:

$$S_i = \sum_{k=0}^{63} Y_k * \cos \frac{(2i-k)(k-16)\pi}{64}$$

 Note that the number of the sub-bands to be
25 generated is assumed to be "N" in the first

embodiment.

Next, the audio data encoding unit 204 sets a value of an unillustrated counter i to $i = 0$ (step S2503) and makes a scale factor extraction unit 2403
5 execute calculating a scale factor of each sub-band (step S2504). This scale factor is extracted in the way that follows.

At first, a sample of a maximum absolute value is searched for, wherein twelve samples are set as
10 one block in every sub-band. Further, a minimum value larger than the maximum absolute value of the sample is selected from a predetermined scale factor table, and this value is set as a scale factor.

The scale factor obtained herein is outputted
15 to a linear quantization unit 2407, a side information encoding unit 2408 and a psychoacoustic modeling unit 2405. Further, the sub-band with the necessary scale factor extracted is outputted to the linear quantization unit 2407 (step S2505).

20 If the value of the unillustrated counter i does not satisfy $i = N-1$, i is incremented, and thereafter the processing is returned to the steps before step S2504. If $i = N-1$, the processing proceeds to step S2507 (step S2506).

25 An audio signal inputted to the FET unit 2404 is divided into M blocks, wherein 512 samples are set as one block. Thereafter, the fast Fourier transform

(FET) is executed for each block (step S2507). A coefficient value of each block generated is outputted to the psychoacoustic modeling unit 2405.

The psychoacoustic modeling unit 2405
5 calculates a signal-to-mask ratio (SMR) on the basis of the inputted coefficient value and the scale factor (step S2508). This calculated SMR is outputted to a dynamic bit assignment unit 2406. Note that this SMR is given as a ratio of an acoustic
10 pressure of each sub-band and a minimum masking level. The method of drawing this SMR is well known, and hence its explanation is herein omitted.

The dynamic bit assignment unit 2406 calculates and determines a bit amount assigned to each sub-band
15 (step S2509). This calculation method will hereinafter be explained referring to a flowchart in FIG. 26.

To begin with, the samples of the respective sub-bands are inputted (step S2601). Next, there is
20 calculated an assignable bit amount obtained by subtracting from a total utilizable bit rate, a bit amount necessary for the header and the data utilized by the user as the user intends, the data needed for an error correction, and so forth (step S2602).
25 Next, a bit amount assigned to each sub-band is calculated by setting the quantization step for each sub-band on the basis of the assignable bit amount.

using a signal-to-noise ratio (SNR) and an MNR (mask-to-noise ratio) (step S2603). The method of drawing this assignable bit amount is introduced in a variety of literatures, and therefore the explanation about
5 this method is omitted.

Thereafter, the quantization step for each sub-band to which the bit amount is assigned, is outputted to the linear quantization unit 240 and to the side information encoding unit 2408 (step S2604).

10 Note that in the first embodiment, the dynamic bit assignment unit 2406 assigns the utilizable total bits so that an amount of codes of the audio encoded data outputted during the ROI setting period becomes larger than an amount of codes of the audio encoded
15 data outputted during the ROI non-setting period. This makes it possible to differentiate between an acoustic quality of the audio data generated during the ROI setting period and that of the audio data generated during the ROI non-setting period.

20 As discussed so far referring to FIG. 26, when the dynamic bit assignment determining unit 2406 determined the bit amount assigned to each sub-band and also the quantization step, the linear quantization unit 2407 executes the quantization
25 based on the quantization step concerned (step S2510). The quantized sub-band sample obtained herein is outputted to the encoded audio data formation unit

2409. Further, the side information encoding unit
2408 encodes the inputted scale factor and the
quantization step information (step S2511), and
outputs them to the encoded audio data formation unit
5 2409.

The encoded audio data formation unit 2409
forms encoded audio data from, as shown in FIG. 27,
the header, the sub-band sample and ancillary data
(which can be arbitrarily utilized by the user) (step
10 S2512), and outputs them to an encoded audio data
output unit 2410. Note that the header is stored
with information such as side information, sampling
frequencies, etc. that are needed for decoding the
encoded audio data concerned.

15 The encoded audio data output unit 2410 output
the encoded audio data to a data integration unit 205
(step S2513).

As mentioned above, the first embodiment
enables the audio data to be encoded with the high
20 acoustic quality by changing the bit rate (the amount
of assignment bits) during the ROI setting period
defined as a period of time significant to a
photographer.

Second Embodiment

25 Next, a second embodiment will be discussed.

In the image processing apparatus in the first
embodiment, the differentiation between the decoded

sound qualities of the audio data generated during the ROI setting period and the ROI non-setting period, is attained by changing the bit rate. According to a second embodiment, the differentiation between the
5 decoded acoustic qualities is attained based on whether the compression is executed or not.

FIG. 31 shows a block diagram of an image processing apparatus 3100 in the second embodiment. This image processing apparatus 3100 is constructed
10 by adding, to the image processing apparatus 200 in the first embodiment, a switch 3101 provided posterior to the audio data obtaining unit 203 and a path extending from the switch 3101 to the data integration unit 205.

15 This switch 3101 is, though normally connected to the audio data encoding unit 204, connected to the route that bypasses the audio data encoding unit 204 when a photographer inputs an instruction of the ROI setting through the ROI setting instruction unit 207.
20 This contrivance actualizes (a mechanism of) whether the compression encoding of the audio data should be done or not.

As described above, the second embodiment has exemplified the method of differentiating between the
25 acoustic qualities of the decoded audio data generated in the two periods of times by compressing the audio data generated during the ROI non-setting

period and by effecting no compression of the audio data generated during the ROI setting period.

Third Embodiment

Next, a third embodiment will be explained.

5 FIG. 28 shows a configuration of an image processing apparatus 2800 of the third embodiment. In the image processing apparatus 2800 in FIG. 28, the blocks denoted with the same numerals as those in the image processing apparatus 200 in FIG. 2 are the same
10 as the blocks shown in FIG. 2, and hence their explanations are herein omitted. The image processing apparatus 2800 in the third embodiment shown in FIG. 28 is an apparatus in which the audio data encoding unit 204 of the image processing
15 apparatus 200 in the first embodiment is replaced with an audio data encoding unit 2801.

For instance, in the case of mounting the image processing apparatus 2800 in the digital still camera and the digital video camera as illustrated in FIG. 9,
20 it is considered that there are a case where the audio data to be inputted are only a speech and a case where the audio data are not under this category, depending on a point of time while the photographing is being conducted. The image processing apparatus
25 2800 of the present embodiment thus includes the audio data encoding unit 2801 having two encoders for encoding the speech data and general audio data,

separately. Two sets of encoded audio data outputted from the two encoders are compared with each other in terms of acoustic qualities of the decoded audio data to store optimum encoded audio data.

5 This processing enables the audio data to be encoded with a high definition but brings about a rise in consumption of the electric power. The third embodiment therefore takes such a structure that the audio data are encoded by use of the two encoders
10 during only the period for which the significant photographing is being conducted, particularly during only the ROI setting period.

 Note that the two encoded audio data encoders provided in the third embodiment are of AAC (Advanced
15 Audio Coding) for compressing various categories of audio data at a high efficiency if the bit rate is equal to or higher than 96 kbps, and of CELP (Code Excited Linear Prediction) superior in its encoding efficiency to the AAC with respect to the compression
20 of the speech data at a bit rate equal to or lower than 64 kbps.

 A frame data encoding method in the third embodiment is the same as the frame data encoding method in the embodiment 1, and therefore the
25 explanation of the frame data encoding method is herein omitted.

 FIG. 29 shows a detailed block diagram of the

audio data encoding unit 2801 in the third embodiment.
The audio data shall be encoded at a bit rate on the
order of 32 through 64 kbps in the third embodiment.

At first, in case the frame data are encoded
5 without being subjected to the ROI setting, the audio
data inputted flow to an AAC encoding unit 2902,
wherein the audio data are encoded at the bit rate of
approximately 32 kbps by the AAC encoding unit. Note
that this AAC-based encoding method is well known,
10 and hence its description is omitted.

Further, if the frame data are encoded after
being subjected to the ROI setting, the audio data
are inputted to the AAC encoding unit 2902 and the
CELP encoding unit 2903. These two encoding units
15 respectively encode the audio data, generate the
encoded audio data and outputs the data to an optimum
coded audio data determining unit 2904.

Subsequently, an explanation of an operation of
the optimum encoded audio data determining unit 2904
20 involves referring to a detailed block diagram of the
optimum encoded audio data determining unit 2904
shown in FIG. 30.

To begin with, at a predetermined time interval,
the encoded audio data (AAC encoded audio data)
25 generated by the AAC encoding unit 2902 and the
encoded audio data (CELP encoded audio data)
generated by the CELP encoding unit 2903, are

inputted respectively from an AAC encoded audio data input unit 3001 and a CELP encoded audio data input unit 3002 and temporarily accumulated in a buffer 3003.

5 An AAC decoding unit 3004 and the CELP decoding unit 3005 copy, to their internally-held memories, the AAC encoded audio data and the CELP encoded audio data that have been stored in the buffer 3003. After this copying, these two decoding units decode the
10 encoded audio data corresponding thereto and respectively output the decoded data to a discrimination unit 3006. Note that an AAC-based decoding method and a CELP-based decoding method are well known, and therefore the details thereof are not
15 described herein.

 The discrimination unit 3006 discerns, based on a predetermined method, which decoded audio data obtained from the two decoded data exhibits a higher acoustic quality, by use of a predetermined parameter,
20 then eliminates encoded audio data exhibiting a lower acoustic quality from on the buffer 3003, and outputs the encoded audio data exhibiting the higher acoustic quality to an encoded audio data output unit 2905 from the buffer 3003. The selected encoded audio
25 data are outputted to the data integration unit 205 from the encoded audio data output unit 2905.

 Note that what has been mentioned above is a

description about the audio data encoding process
when the image is subjected to the ROI setting and
thus encoded, while when the ROI setting is not done,
the data encoded in the AAC encoding unit 2902 are
5 outputted as they are.

As described above the third embodiment has
exemplified the method of using the audio encoder for
speech and the audio encoder for other general audio
data during only the ROI setting period of the image
10 with judging the use thereof. This encoder using
method enables the acoustic quality of the decoded
audio data during the ROI setting period to be more
enhanced than the acoustic quality of the decoded
audio data during the ROI non-setting period.

15 Other Embodiments

All the embodiments involve utilizing the
discrete wavelet transform for the series transform
of the frame data, however, the present invention is
not limited to this wavelet transform. There is no
20 problem if a discrete cosine transform etc., may also
be utilized for the series transform.

Note that the present invention may be applied
as a part of a system constructed of a plurality of
appliances (e.g., a host computer, an interface
25 appliance, a reader, a printer and so on) or may be
so applied as to be mounted in a part of an apparatus
constructed of one single appliance (for example, a

copying machine, the digital still camera, the digital video camera and so forth).

Moreover, the present invention is not confined to only the apparatus and the method for actualizing the embodiments discussed above, and the scope of the present invention includes a case of actualizing the embodiments discussed above by supplying a computer (a CPU (Central Processing Unit) or an MPU (Microprocessing Unit)) within the system or the apparatus with software program codes for actualizing the embodiments discussed above and by making the computer within the system or the apparatus operate a variety of devices in accordance with the program codes.

Further, in this case, the software-related program codes themselves actualize the functions of the embodiments discussed above, and the scope of the present invention therefore includes the program codes themselves and a means for supplying these program codes to the computer, to be specific, a storage medium stored with the program codes given above.

The storage medium stored with these program codes can involve the use of, e.g., a floppy disk, a hard disk, an optical disk, a magneto-optic disk, a CD-ROM, a magnetic tape, a nonvolatile memory card, a ROM and so on.

Moreover, those program codes are included in the scope of the present invention in a case where the embodiments discussed above are actualized in such a way that the program codes cooperate with OS
5 (Operating System) running on the computer or other application software, etc. as well as in the case where the functions of the embodiments discussed above are actualized by the computer's controlling the variety of devices in accordance with only the
10 program codes supplied.

Still further, the scope of the present invention includes a case in which the program codes supplied are stored in the memory provided in a function extended board of the computer or in a
15 function extended unit connected to the computer, thereafter the CPU, etc. provided in the function extended board or in the function extended unit executes a part or the whole of the actual processing on the basis of instructions of the program codes,
20 and the embodiments discussed above are actualized by this process.

As discussed above, according to the present invention, in case there is differentiated in the degree of significance between the frames of the
25 moving image due to the ROI setting, etc., the acoustic quality of the audio data can be changed in accordance with the degree of significance of the

frame, whereby the moving image and voice exhibiting a high visual effect can be reproduced.

Many widely different embodiments of the present invention may be constructed without
5 departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention. It should be understood that the present invention is not limited to the specific embodiments described in the specification, except as defined in the appended claims.